

VZCZCXRO9925

OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEH DU RUEHKUK RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHROV RUEHTRO
DE RUEHKH #1602/01 3051002
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 311002Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2206
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001602

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/27/2018

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: SPI WILL BE ONE OF MANY FAILED PEACE INITIATIVES,
SAYS SEASONED PARTICIPANT

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)
)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On October 29, veteran Darfur administrator and member of the Sudan People's Initiative, Tayyeb Muktar, told CDA Fernandez that the Sudan People's Initiative will likely become just one of many failed Darfur peace initiatives. Muktar also asserted that the once peaceful Fur tribe is slowly transforming into an aggressive and militarized ethnic group focused on revenge. Muktar also discussed the role of Chad and Libya in Darfur (including his personal account of serving as police commissioner in Darfur and arresting Idris Deby.) Muktar also strongly asserted that now is not the time for the voluntary return of Darfur's IDPs to their original lands and villages. END SUMMARY.

PESSIMISTIC ABOUT SPI AND QATAR

¶2. (C) Former long serving police commissioner in Darfur and (the now dissolved) West Kordofan state, retired General Tayyeb Muktar opened his meeting with CDA Fernandez stating that he was quite pessimistic about both the Sudan People's Initiative (SPI) and potential talks in Qatar. Muktar stated that he has directly participated in over 86 different local reconciliation conferences on Darfur and attended more than one hundred. "We sit and talk and come up with good ideas and nothing ever comes out of them," said Muktar. There is a vicious cycle of a crisis, followed by a reconciliation on paper, followed by no implementation of the peace agreement. According to Muktar, no IDP representatives have participated in the Sudan People's Initiative, only the Darfuri and Khartoum elites. "These elites and intellectuals are actually part of the problem, as they will not allow the real people of Darfur to participate and gain power," claimed Muktar. This disconnect between the elite and IDPS is so great, said Muktar, that many of the SPI's participants are not "even able to enter the IDP camps to see what is happening as the people would drive them away." With respect to Qatar, Muktar claimed "Qatar is running after Darfur. They want to urgently solve the problem but they do not actually know what the problem is." Darfur is complicated, but it could have been solved years ago, claimed Muktar, recounting that he told senior Sudanese politicians years ago with the Arabic proverb, "You need to address the problem now before the ignorant take it from the knowledgeable."

NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR RECONCILIATION

¶3. (C) Muktar stated that he is not even optimistic about the work of his own SPI subcommittee, the "Reconciliation and Social Fabric" group where he serves as rapporteur. Muktar said the composition of this subcommittee represents the problem of Darfur, with prominent representatives from the

three major battling tribes: Shartai Ibrahim Abdalla of the Fur tribe (Vice-Chair); notorious janjaweed commander Musa Hilal of the Arab Mahamid tribe (Vice-Chair); and Minni Minnawi of the Zaghawa (Chairman). Despite his participation in this committee, Muktar believes that now is not the time to focus on reconciliation between Darfur's tribes. The conflict in Darfur has dragged on for over six years, said Muktar, and the people of Darfur have now developed deeply rooted grievances against differing tribes. Because of this, in addition to the lack of a single leader in the region, Darfur will be more difficult to solve than the North-South civil war, claimed Muktar.

THE PEACEFUL FUR TRIBE IS SLOWLY CHANGING

14. (C) Muktar emphasized that in contrast to the aggressive and well-armed Zaghawa, the Fur used to be a largely peaceful people. However, the six years of conflict in Darfur have started to change the Fur. For example, in a recent visit to Kalma IDP camp, Muktar encountered a ten-year old Fur boy whose only dream was to buy a weapon and avenge the death of his father. Muktar said that given his 25-plus years of experience with the largely peaceful people of Darfur, he was shocked by this example, and others where revenge (for rape, murder, destruction, and displacement of family members) has become the primary motivation for many young Fur. The people of Kalma camp told Muktar that the IDPs of Kalma camp have now counted the fifth agricultural season that they have spent in IDP camps. Without work, land, or optimism, the previously peaceful Fur IDPs have now started to consider violence as one option to restore their land, pride, and honor. This is an issue which can be addressed but it cannot

KHARTOUM 00001602 002 OF 002

be done with the incremental gradualism the regime is using in its approach to Darfur.

FOREIGN INFLUENCE

15. (C) Foreign influence and an influx of weapons into Darfur have also negatively impacted Darfur. As police commissioner, Muktar recalled arresting Idris Deby for illegally entering Sudan, and how later Sudanese politicians offered him a choice of exile in North Sudan or invading Chad. Muktar also recounted a conversation with Libyan President Qaddafi who directly told him "Darfur is a strategic area for us and we need to have a presence." Muktar claimed that the Libyans are responsible for a large part of the militarization and spread of weapons in Darfur. As an example of the previously sleepy and peaceful nature of Darfur, Muktar fondly recalled that in the 1970's as police commissioner, there was one period of over three months where there was not a single reported crime in all of Darfur. "It is sad to see Darfur then and now," stated Muktar. He described the region as now made up of cities, IDP camps and the rest is a no man's land with roving rebels, gangs and militias.

VOLUNTARY RETURN OF IDPS IS CURRENTLY NOT AN OPTION

16. (C) Muktar stated that the Sudanese government's fixation on the return of IDPs to their original villages is not appropriate at this time. The GoS has done nothing to rebuild the villages it bombed or destroyed with its proxy forces. For example, Muktar stated that he recently visited fourteen former villages (now ghost towns) surrounding Nyala, and "although they were originally destroyed in 2003, it looked like they had just been destroyed yesterday with the ashes still in place." The difficulty of return is compounded by the fact that heavily armed Arab tribes from West Africa have now settled on land previously occupied by the IDPs, said Muktar. Muktar claimed that the NCP's focus on return of IDPs is "not logical" and that the Government's policies in Darfur have led to a forced urbanization of a previously dispersed and rural population.

COMMENT

- - - - -

17. (C) Like a talkative grandfather telling wandering and entertaining war stories, Muktar provided some fascinating background on the conflict in Darfur. His pessimism stems from the dashed expectations of over one hundred failed local peace initiatives. Although we hope that some good will come out of the SPI and Qatar, for now, one cannot help but predict that Muktar's pessimism could be right again. The problem is not coming to some sort of agreement in Doha between rebels and the Khartoum regime. That is doable. The problem is how to mend the rent social fabric of Darfur which has been so torn by five years of destructive NCP policies. Even if the regime is now, at the 11th hour, sincere in wanting to "solve Darfur" (and the jury is still out on whether they are sincere), mollifying 2.7 million angry, alienated IDPs will not be easy, even if Qatar opens up its coffers. However, some targeted interventions by the US with the Qataris and with the GOS could yet help steer the proposed Qatar initiative in a positive direction to try to at least ameliorate the situation on the ground and reverse the trend towards even greater violence and unrest in Darfur.

FERNANDEZ